

First, thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion about the murals in the AR Building, federal triangle, Washington, D.C., it is important for GSA to understand my thoughts.

I am uniquely qualified to comment on the murals in the AR building. This is an issue that I have been involved with since 1999, when I first moved to the AR building and passed the murals everyday on the way to my office. I worked in the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation from 1999 to 2001. I was there on a federal Interpersonal Agreement from the Yakama Nation. I was among the original people to bring this issue to the attention of the Administrator and one of the first to make the motion to have them reviewed. I attended many meetings, was interviewed by the radio, and protested the murals for the entire two years that I was subjected to their presence. I saw the murals every day as they were in the way of me accessing my office. As an American Indian, I felt that the murals were not appropriate for "free" viewing. I believed that they should not be destroyed, but rather they need to be put in a controlled environment where people go the specifically view "historical art".

I was ashamed, as a Senior Indian Program Manager in the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation to ask tribal leaders to come to my office, for policy level discussions, and expose them to such dramatic scenes. As you can imagine, the murals always set a very somber tone to our discussions and in many cases hampered my ability to seek agreement on important policy matters and served as a catalyst to diminish the credibility for the EPA and the federal government. It was an embarrassment to me and the EPA to have to explain them away before we could get down to serious discussions about relevant environmental matters.

To this day, Indian people pass those murals to and from the same office that I managed. The only issue here is what to do with the murals. I believe that there are a number of alternatives. First, so long as they are not destroyed, they don't have to be displayed, they could be covered. Alternately, they could be moved to a more suitable location where people can have a chance to review and explanation or get a verbal description of the depiction from a qualified historian or art specialist. These murals need to be moved to a location where people demand to see art. They should not interfere with the duties of the federal government and the ability of the EPA to carry out its mission in Indian Country. If they are a critical part of American history, put them in the Smithsonian and let people view them along with the other art.

It's hard for me to explain to GSA how disturbing it was to work in that building. I felt always that I should stand, next to the murals and tell people that we Indians are not, and have never been, the people that the artist depicted in the murals. The building is not the place to teach people about the history of contemporary American art or history. Please remove the murals.

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